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Address*
by
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I am very pleased to have this opportunity to visit Ohio State University--one of the Nation's great intellectual communities--an outstanding symbol of the unique partnership through which the State and Federal Governments have, over a long period and in varying ways and degrees, worked together in the establishment and support of education.

It is a unique partnership, because, although direct Federal participation in higher education began with the Morrill Land Grant Act a century ago and has in the past two decades been intensified, there has been no Federal control of education. The principle of State responsibility for education, established under the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution, has been preserved, and this great university exemplifies the successful discharge of that responsibility.

I welcomed your gracious invitation to me, as Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, to address this commencement audience, not only because of the pleasant associations which are renewed by a visit here but because I consider this a most appropriate time and place for reviewing our present educational position as a nation and for looking to the future.

President Kennedy gave expression to a recognition of the present and future crucial role of education when he said last year in his message to the Congress, "Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic

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growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this, all require the maximum development of every young American's capacity."

We have in recent years come to recognize more clearly the vital role of education as one of the basic solutions to a wide range of problems and challenges.

Education, in one form or another, inevitably assumes a prominent place, not only in plans for space exploration but in plans for solving the problems of dependency, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, mental illness and mental retardation, and a wide variety of other social, economic, and cultural challenges.

We have come to realize that we must educate oncoming generations, not only for space-age vocations and professions but also for space-age citizenship in the broadest sense.

There has come to us a realization that education--once considered primarily a personal interest--has, in this space age, become a crucial matter of the national interest.

H. G. Wells observed, more prophetically then he perhaps knew, shortly after World War I, that "history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." Much has happened since then to underline the literal truth of the observation.

How are we faring in this fateful race?

How adequate a job are we doing in preparing our young people to make their necessary vocational or professional contribution in the new atomic age which was born under the stadium stands of a great university such as this just 20 years ago?

How well are we preparing our young people, not only as productive individuals but as citizens and leaders of the future?

How effectively are we giving them an awareness of their place in the family of man drawn close in a now small world?

How well are they being prepared to preserve and carry forward our own culture and tradition toward the ultimate destiny of our democratic society?

These are sober questions which in recent years have come to trouble the conscience of responsibile citizens throughout the land.

There are questions which you young people, at this significant point in your personal growth, need to ask--about yourselves and about the other millions of your generation who will soon inherit the responsibilities that all Americans share for the continued vitality and safekeeping of this democracy.

Here, in the company of some 25,000 fellow students, led by a distinguished faculty of more than 2,000 teachers and scholars, surrounded by laboratories and libraries, it is sometimes difficult to realize just how small an oasis of knowledge this campus actually is--how relatively few of your generation have enjoyed the splendid opportunities offered by this and some 2,000 other institutions of higher learning to nurture their talents and to bring them to full fruition.

Under present conditions, out of every 10 youngsters now in grade schools, only 2 will graduate from college. Two more out of that 10 will enter college but never finish. Three out of 10 will not complete high school.

Some of the reasons for this rather bleak forecast are readily apparent. I scarcely need tell this audience that a major barrier to higher education for thousands of able students is simply its high cost. The cost of a medical

education has become almost prohibitive for the majority of young people. Even in our great public institutions, general tuition charges during the last 10 years have risen by about 80 percent. In private colleges they have more than doubled.

This economic pinch has led to a major shift in the traditional enrollment ratio between public and private institutions. Tax-supported institutions, with their lower tuition costs, today are accommodating more than 60 percent of our college students, while 10 years ago they were serving about half the college population.

But your president, Dr. Fawcett, as well as the head of any private institution, will be quick to tell you that these sizable fees fall far short of covering the actual cost of the instruction you have received and the facilities essential for giving it. These costs are met by public and private funds--by State and local taxes, private gifts, and in some specific areas--principally in agriculture and the sciences--by grants from the Federal Government.

We are faced with a triple need: The need for expanding educational opportunity on the basis of our present population, the need to accommodate an increasing population, and the need to provide for an increasing proportion of high school seniors who want to continue their formal education beyond high school graduation.

The Ohio State Department of Education has estimated that the number of high school graduates in Ohio in 1964 will be twice what it was in 1954. Furthermore, enrollment in Ohio colleges is estimated to double by 1970. The U.S. Office of Education has predicted an approximate doubling of college enrollment

for the Nation during the sixties, with the largest increases in the next 3 academic years--that is, 1963-64, 1964-65, and 1965-66.

Even today, without considering these additional needs, we are short nearly 130,000 classrooms. As a result, some one-half million students are attending school in double shifts. Nearly 2 million children in elementary and secondary schools are overcrowding our classrooms, a condition that affects the education of all the students who share these classrooms--about 10 million students in all.

I have been talking about some of the quantitative dimensions of education's needs--the physical capacity of our schools and colleges to absorb the impact of our population increase. But education is not all brick and mortar and plate glass. It is the dissemination of knowledge to questioning minds, and its essential component is good teaching.

One of the most durable possessions of a college graduate is the recollection of an outstanding teacher and the exciting experience of having one's mind stretched until it fully grasps a new idea and is able to reach out toward other new ideas.

The potential influence of a teacher is virtually limitless. As Henry Adams observed, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

From my own experience I can recall certain teachers who profoundly influenced my life and my thought. Each of you here must have had a similar experience.

In spite of this recognition of the value of good teaching, we Americans have consistently failed to accord the teaching profession the support it deserves--

and needs--in order to meet the demands placed upon it.

I am inclined to feel that education--its teachers and administrators--have on occasion been unjustly criticized in recent years for the shortsightedness of others in failing to provide them the means to achieve excellence in the schools.

The educational process itself--the "how" of learning--has not been given adequate attention, although we are investing billions in research and development of new processes which depend ultimately for their success on equal advances in education.

All this has been the subject of intensive public soul searching as our concern with the problems of education has increased.

I think there is little doubt left in anyone's mind about the importance of education to economic growth, to the national defense, and to the maintenance of our position of leadership in the free world.

There is little disagreement among us about what is needed for education:

--An increase in our physical establishment--more buildings, more classrooms.

--Expansion of educational opportunities so that every citizen is able to make the most of his talents.

--And upgrading the quality of education--bringing the curriculum and teaching techniques up to date with modern times.

These basic goals for education are clear to all of us now. The next question is how we shall reach them.

If the States and local communities, which bear primary responsibility for education, could meet these needs fully with their own resources, there would be no massive problems for education today.

The disparity of educational opportunities and educational facilities among the various States is evidence that much more needs to be done in many

places. Actually, many of the poorer States are making a far larger proportional contribution of their income to education than some States which are better off. For these States, however, a maximum effort for education does not necessarily result in excellent schools.

The great and growing mobility of the American people creates another complicating factor. With families increasingly on the move, the educational deficiencies of one State as compared with another cease to be a matter of purely local concern. For it is the education they received back home which determines whether the newcomers become productive members of their new communities or a financial and social burden on them.

The whole national effort to stimulate our economy, to achieve growth, to strengthen our defenses, to establish a society where it is possible for every individual to build for himself and his family a good life--all these are dependent to one degree or another on our progress in education.

The Federal Government has a stake in these matters. With its vast resources for cooperative action and its equally vast responsibilities for the well-being of the Nation, it cannot in good faith sit idly by while the States struggle along unaided. Such a course would lead to catastrophe, for education will lose the race if we do not come to its support.

We have not and do not propose to usurp the rights and responsibilities of the States.

We have not and do not propose to violate either the spirit or the word of the Constitution which reserves these rights to the States.

We have no intention of exercising "Federal control" over the separate State educational establishments. Under our democratic system of government,

with its built-in checks and balances, the possibility of such Federal interference is remote, indeed.

Basic proposals for Federal assistance to American education were defeated in the last Congress. This legislative program is being reassessed and efforts to secure approval of a Federal aid to education program will be renewed when the 88th Congress convenes next month.

I am hopeful that the proposals presented will be studied and debated with objectivity and considered on their merits alone. It would be a great disservice to our young people--and to the well-being of our society--if progress in education is again thwarted by controversy over racial and religious differences among our people. Failure to meet our educational needs will deepen these cleavages and make the ultimate resolution of these differences all the more difficult.

I have been talking about the need for making educational opportunity available. There is another important factor, beyond the need for classrooms and teachers.

That factor is the personal commitment of the student. This only you and those young people who will follow you can provide. Opportunity for an education can be made available to an individual, but this is only the beginning. From that point on it is a personal matter.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a little more than a century ago, wrote in his journal, "The days come and go like muffled and veiled figures sent from a distant friendly party, but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away."

Our days bring gifts far beyond anything of which Emerson could have dreamed. They come to us bearing the keys to the secrets of the universe. They place in our hands the means to provide a better life for all mankind. They offer each of us, individually, opportunity for personal growth and achievement beyond anything dreamed of in times past.

If we do not use these gifts, the days will silently carry them away.

The diploma you are receiving this morning attests to your good use of the gifts of days past. Because of this, the days to come will be even more bountiful. Continue to use the gifts each new day will bring to you.

The months and years ahead will require more than mere competence, more than mere decency, more than mere acquiescence in the principles of freedom and enjoyment of their benefits.

You will be called upon to use all the power of imagination with which of all living creatures only human beings have been endowed.

This is the creative power--the power that enables us to see a better world.

You will be called upon for the personal commitment needed to create the better world your imagination visualizes.

We have the greatest opportunity history has ever afforded the human race--the opportunity to do something bold and creative in shaping a new world, a peaceful world, in which justice shall reign and spiritual and physical well-being prevail for all mankind.

If we are to achieve such a world, we must continue to face the large issues of complex international relationships, of nuclear weapons, and of war and peace with courage and with confidence in the knowledge that these issues are manageable and that we are neither the captives nor the pawns of history.

We are in a period of great change. It is, in a sense, a period of countdown for the launching of a new era.

May the countdown for tomorrow signal the release of a glorious burst of human energy and an increase in the power of the human will and intellect, guided by moral and spiritual values, which will carry mankind to its true destiny.

That destiny is not the darkness of oblivion.

I am convinced that we shall not, in the words of Maxwell Anderson, "shut out the light, close our minds and be like a million cities of the past that came up out of mud, worshipped darkness a little while, and went back, forgotten, into darkness."

May we be a nation drenched with lasting light. May our destiny be achieved in the eternal light of truth, wisdom, and goodness. May we realize that human destiny is the sum of our individual destinies which we shape through our personal goals.

As you leave this university may you remember always why you were here, and may the enthusiasm and determination that has brought you this far not diminish but grow with the years.

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